

single out examples of these from the numerous ones in recent publications. Rather it is our endeavor to stay the tide of folly.

MANY BOTANISTS who appreciate their limitations in the matter of describing new species, ignore or underrate their limitations in the matter of nomenclature. It is vastly easier as a rule to determine and describe a new species than to settle on the oldest proper name of a plant. In the latter, experience is of even greater value than in the former. Those who think it a mere matter of searching through books will find in their undoing that it is much more.

Is IT not also curious, from a psychological point of view, that one who is compiling a local flora or writing an article on local plants, should decline to use the names applied to the plants in the flora of the country — names which it is quite certain designate unmistakably what plant is meant — and should go searching after other names which *may* be older and *may* be applicable to the plants under consideration? Is it not evident that something other than a clear indication of the plants is sought? Is it the cheap renown of differing from “an authority?”

WHILE LESQUEREUX and James's Manual is the best book on the mosses of North America, let us use the names therein, even though we see their faults. While Gray's Manual remains the best book on the flowering plants of its range let us use its names, and “therewith be content.” And so of every book. Accept the best till there is a better. Only when monographing a group has one a moral right to discard any name however bad.

CURRENT LITERATURE.

Minor Notices.

PLANTÆ EUROPEÆ is the title of an important work by Dr. K. Richter, whose first volume has just appeared. It is intended to be a systematic enumeration, with synonymy, of the indigenous phanerogams of Europe. The first volume contains 378 pages, with a very complete index, and presents the Gymnosperms and Monocotyledons. In the matter of nomenclature the oldest specific name is adopted, in whatever genus it has appeared. The Gymnosperms show 8 genera and 40 species; while the Monocotyledons have an enumeration of 251 genera and 1799 species. The largest family is Gramineæ, with 751 species, followed by Liliaceæ (342 species), Cyperaceæ (287 species), Orchidaceæ (170 species), and Iridaceæ (105 species). The work is an

exceedingly important one, not only in bringing together in handy form all the species of phanerogams with their synonymy, but also in helping establish the nomenclature of European plants. It is published by Wilhelm Engelmann of Leipzig.

A HANDBOOK of Geographical Botany, by Dr. Oscar Drude, has recently been issued from the press of J. Engelhorn of Stuttgart, as one of a series of geographical handbooks under the general direction of Dr. F. Ratzel. The book contains nearly 600 pages and several colored maps, and is altogether one of the most complete compends of phytogeography that has appeared. The relation of plants to environment is discussed in all its ramifications. The conditions which cause a special display of certain plant groups in different regions are fully considered; and finally the different plant regions of the earth (some twenty-one principal ones) are described. We would commend this book to any would-be translator, as one that deserves to be speedily translated into English, for its range is world-wide and its usefulness should be equally extensive.

AN INTERESTING WORK, by A. Osw. Kihlman, entitled "Pflanzenbiologische Studien aus Russisch Lappland," has just been published in Helsingfors (Finland). It appears as a part of the Proceedings of the Finnish Biological Society. The book contains 300 pages, many additional tables, 14 plates, and a colored map. The plates, which are reproduced from photographs, are exceedingly interesting, showing the landscape of Lapland and the characteristic plant life. The flat land, the scraggy shrubs and trees, the deep snows, and the altogether dreary look make a strong impression. Of course, all this is but superficial; and the effect of these conditions on plant life is the theme which is fully discussed.

OPEN LETTERS.

To phytographers, especially Cryptogamists.

La longue expérience que j'ai faite dans l'élaboration de mon *Sylloge Fungorum omnium* m'a persuadé de l'utilité, je dirai même de la nécessité, de suivre dans la description des plantes certaines règles qui sont trop souvent négligées. Voici ces recommandations:

1. Il est nécessaire que les botanistes qui décrivent des espèces nouvelles en les traitant du point de vue de la morphologie et de la biologie, avec des détails très minutieux et très compliqués, y joignent des diagnoses spécifiques ou génériques (préférentiellement en latin) concises et comparatives selon les règles phytographiques. En effet il est très difficile et souvent très ambigu de choisir dans la foule des détails les caractères essentiels et différentiels.